



Protecting children against online violence – Reflections from the EU Kids Online and the Net Children Go Mobile projects

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del Sacro Cuore



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Main questions of my presentation

- With which types of online risks and violence are children confronted with nowadays?
 - To what extent are children harmed by these risks?
- Which initiatives, policies and practices can be effective in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the harm for children in relation to ICT use?



Online opportunities and risks

- New technologies, and particularly social media, offer a myriad of **opportunities**:
 - greater access to education
 - participation,
 - information or socialization
- However, they also create new opportunities for **new forms of risks** and sometimes also **harm**



Online Risks

- Evidence is growing that the **internet is becoming part of the offline risks and negative experiences that may harm children:**
 - Contact or conduct risks:grooming, sexting or Cyberbullying
 - exposure to pornography
 - violent UGC
 - sexual exploitation, child abuse images or child pornography
 - other potentially harmful experiences

Classifying online Risks

| | Content Child as receiver (of mass productions) | Contact Child as participant (adult-initiated activity) | Conduct Child as actor (perpetrator / victim) |
|------------|--|--|--|
| Aggressive | Violent / gory content | Harassment, stalking | Bullying, hostile peer activity |
| Sexual | Pornographic content | 'Grooming', sexual abuse or exploitation | Sexually harassment, 'sexting' |
| Values | Racist / hateful content | Ideological persuasion | Potentially harmful user-generated content |
| Commercial | Embedded marketing | Personal data misuse | Gambling, copyright infringement |

Experiences of risk and harm

EU Kids online survey 2010

| | Sexual images | Bullying | Sexual messages* | Meeting new people |
|--|---------------|----------|------------------|--------------------|
| Experienced the risk at all | 23 | 19 | --- | --- |
| Experienced the risk online | 14 | 6 | 15 | 9 |
| Online perpetrators | --- | 3 | 3 | --- |
| Felt bothered | 4 | --- | 4 | 1 |
| Felt bothered (% of those who experienced the risk) | 32 | --- | 25 | 11 |
| (Fairly) upset (% of those who felt bothered) | 44 | 55 | 45 | 50 |

EU Kids online (survey 2010), Base: All children,
n=25.142

Lots of concerns, many relate to violence

What bothers kids your age?



Fighting. People being cruel to animals and hitting them. (Girl, 11)

Horrid games. Killing each other. Batting games. Zombie. (Boy, 10)

Dead bodies, blood, sexual images/videos. Dying people. (Girl, 13)

Porn. Websites showing people doing suicide. (Boy, 12)

Porn websites. Information on how to be anorexic, kill yourself, get drugs. (Girl, 15)

Hate groups on Facebook being created about them. (Boy, 12)

Death by beating. Inappropriate images, sexual images. (Girl, 15)

Graphic images like gore or pornography. (Boy, 14)

Winding people up. Cyber bullying. Threatening. (Boy, 13)

Bullying, racism, fighting, weird voice clips, too many webcam requests!! (Girl, 14)

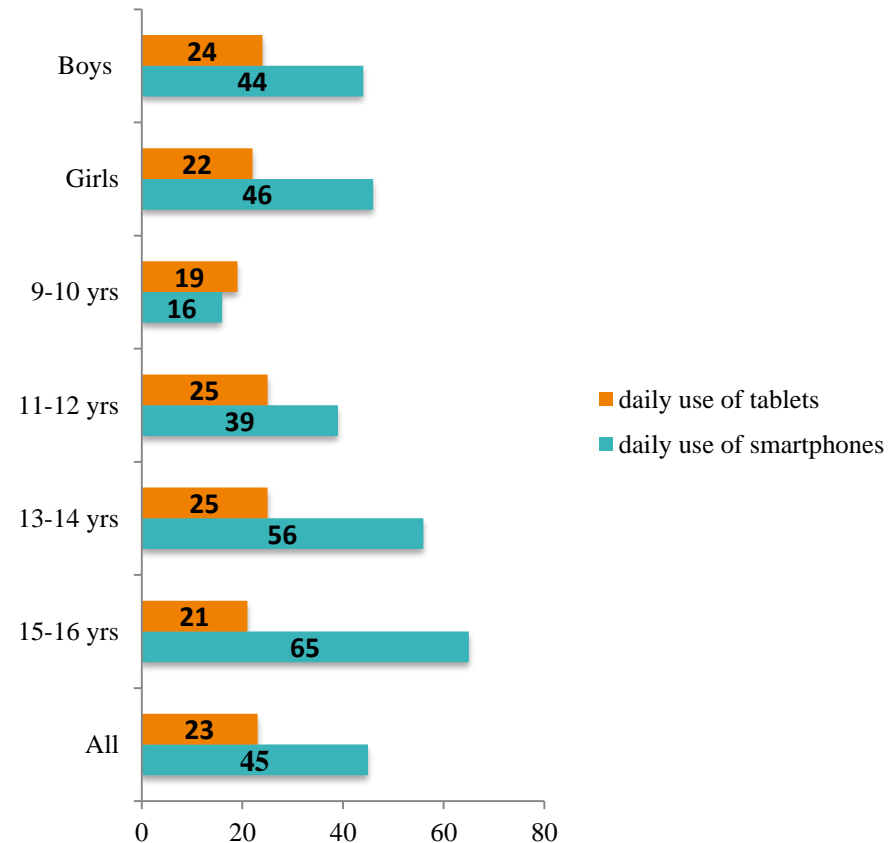
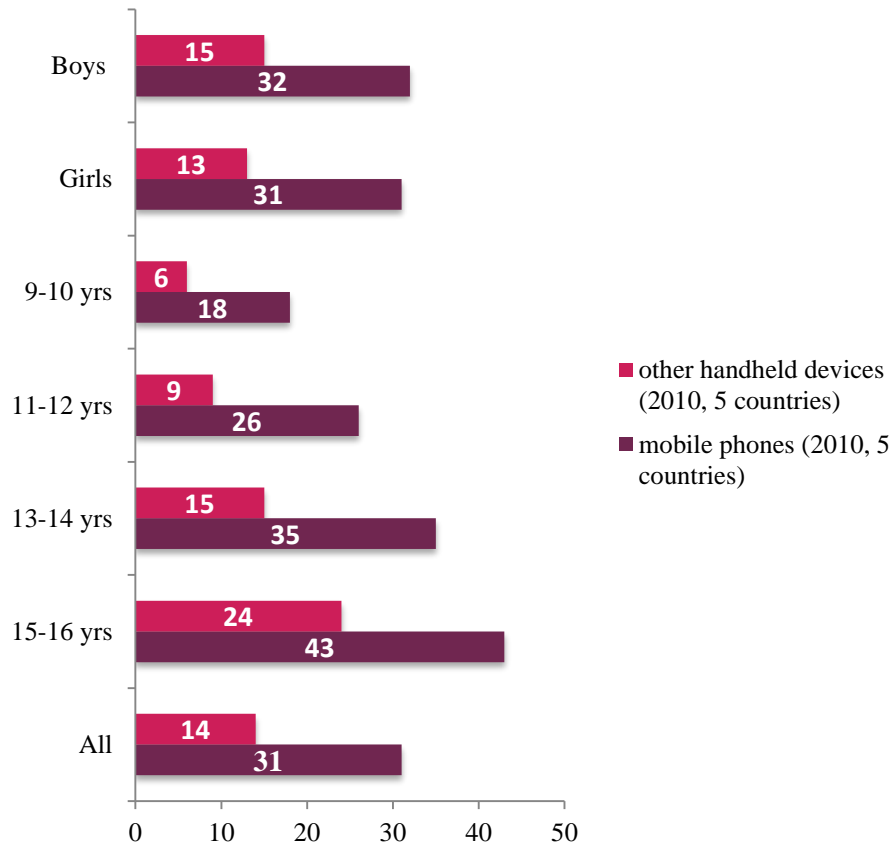
Freddie Kruger. Scary films. Facebook. YouTube. (Girl, 9)

YouTube. Terrible videos. Terrible images. (Boy, 13)



What has changed since 2010 (1)?

More mobile devices to go online

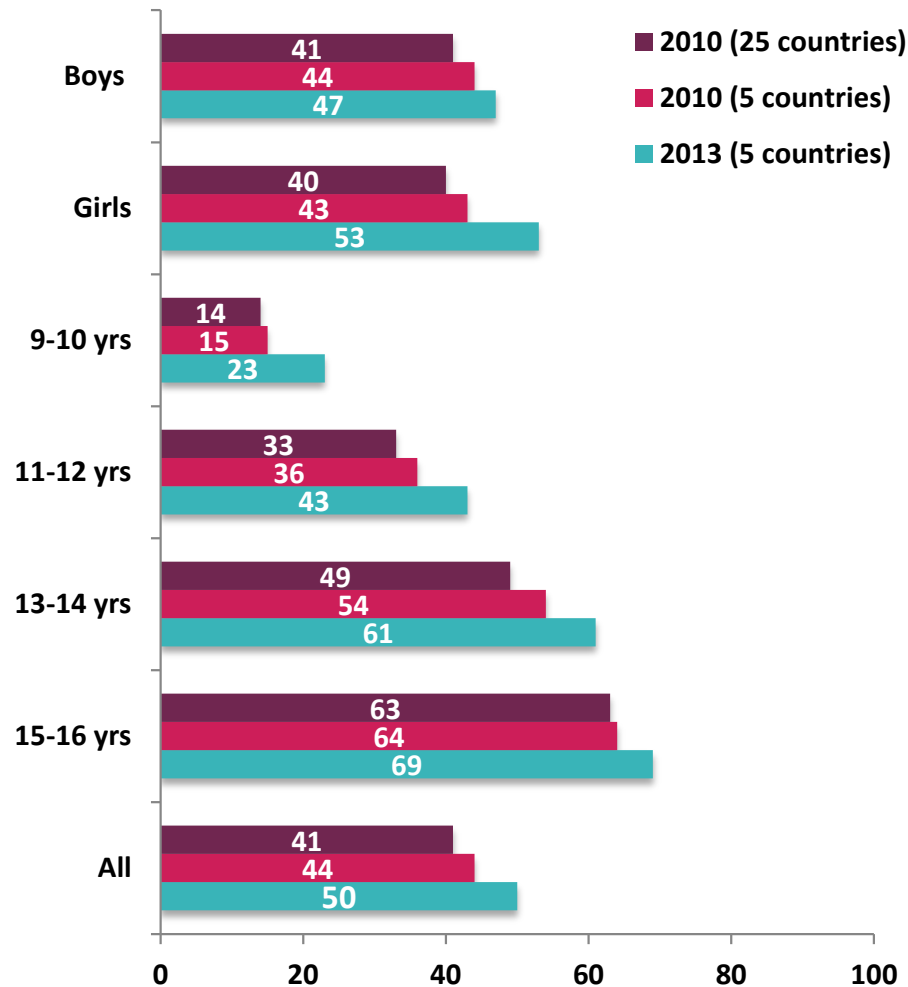


What has changed since 2010 (2)?

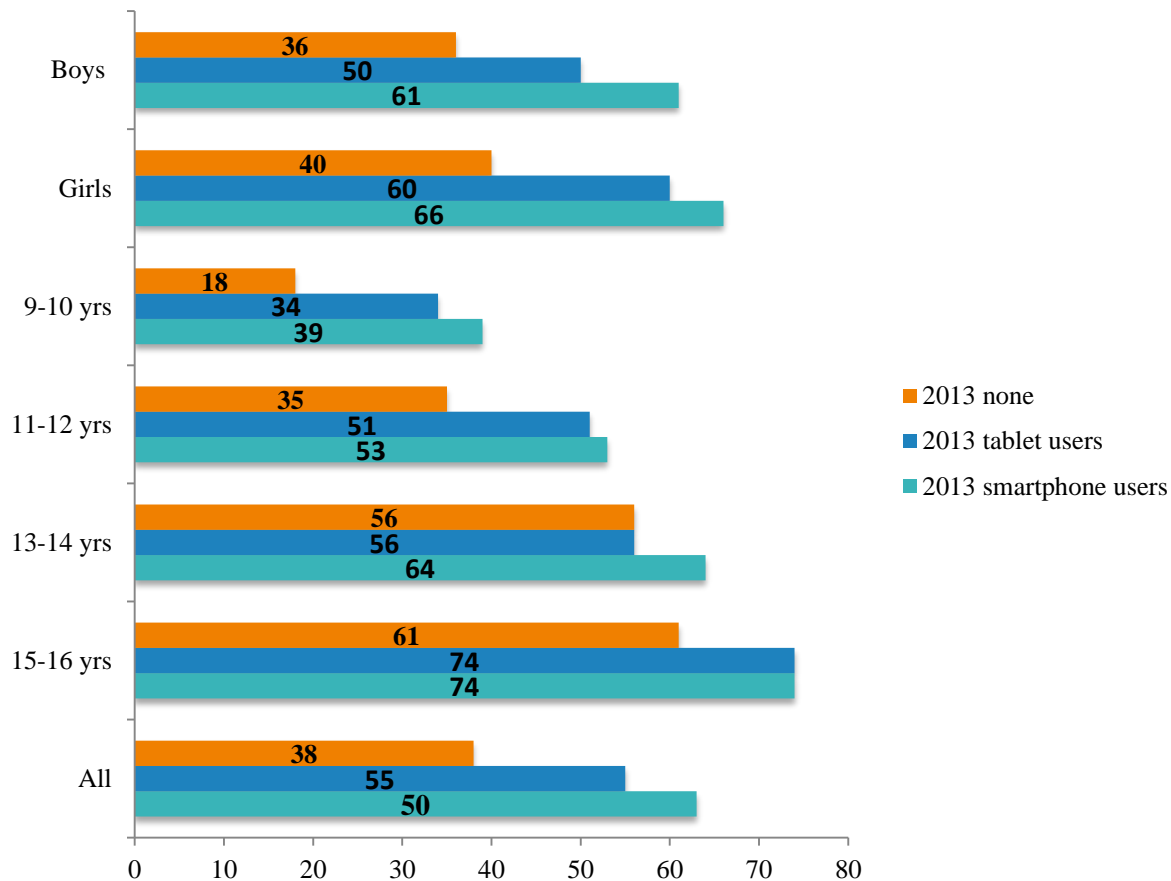
- **Rise in cyberbullying**, esp. for girls, but offline bullying is still greater
- Rise in meeting strangers (offline)
- **Rise in negative UGC**, but not in data misuse
- Slight rise in porn
- Sexting remains the same
- **Rise in % who self-report harmful experiences**, especially girls & teens



Slight increase in % who encountered one or more online risks



Tablet and smart phone users more likely to encounter one or more risks



What about violent online content?



Sexual risks

- **Sexual risks** – that is seeing sexual images or receiving sexual messages online – are commonly encountered, but are **experienced as harmful by few of the children**

“It happened on my computer - though they all have to access it with their own password, so they are not allowed on certain websites unless I leave it on – and it happened, I found them in the bathroom watching pornographic websites, on my laptop computer”

(Mother of a 13-year old boy)




Violent material

- **Violent material receives less public attention than sexual material, but many children are particularly concerned about violent, aggressive or gory online content**
 - images and descriptions associated with war and other atrocities
 - domestic abuse and violence
 - cruelty to animals
 - material that promotes racial and religious hatred, homophobia or misogyny



User Generated Content (UGC)

- a large amount of easily accessible **material, usually user generated content (UGC)** that **addresses and, tacitly or explicitly, encourages harmful behaviour among children and adolescents:**
 - websites and blogs that discuss suicide (including the efficacy of different methods of suicide)
 - eating disorders (“pro-ana” and “pro-mia” sites)
 - self-harm (especially “cutting”) and drug use

Sponsored 

[See all](#)

Afvallen (SCHOKKEND)



Vergeet de sportschool, lees dit artikel en je streefgewicht is dichterbij dan je denkt!

How do children cope with online risks?

- Online coping are ‘internet-specific problem solving strategies children adopt after a negative experience online’
- Learning how to cope with negative experiences => building **resilience**
- The EU Kids Online survey identified three main coping strategies:
 - **passive responses** (e.g. fatalistic (stop using the internet for while) and self-accusatory responses (feeling guilty about what happened))
 - **proactive responses** (e.g. reporting inappropriate content and contact, blocking the unwanted contact, etc.)
 - **communicative responses** (talking with parents, peers, teachers or other trusted people about what happened)



Smartphone users have more safety skills but, overall, skills have declined

| % who say they can... | 9-12 years | | 13-16 years | | All* (users and non-users) | EU Kids Online 2010 |
|--|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| | Non user | S-ph user | Non user | S-ph user | | |
| Block unwanted adverts or junk mail spam | 21 | 34 | 49 | 70 | 43 | 51 |
| Delete the record of which sites they have visited | 26 | 46 | 58 | 77 | 51 | 52 |
| Change privacy settings on a social networking profile | 22 | 49 | 64 | 89 | 55 | 56 |
| Block messages from someone they don't want to hear from | 27 | 54 | 69 | 88 | 59 | 64 |
| Block pop-ups | 20 | 40 | 55 | 66 | 44 | |
| Find information on how to use the internet safely | 31 | 47 | 59 | 77 | 53 | 63 |

The older the safer

- As regards safety skills we observe consistent variations by **age** and partly by **gender**:
 - Boys generally claim more safety skills than girls
 - Teenagers claim more than double the skills reported by younger children
 - Younger children who are tablet users claim considerably more safety skills related to SNS

REFLECTIONS

Online violence: Old wine in new bottle?



UK Metro`s headline (27-05-14)

music store
mobile & calls
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More children 'self-harming because of cyber-bullying'

THE number of children admitted to hospital for self-harm has risen by 30 per cent in a year – with cyber-bullying to blame, according to experts.

Cases included a boy of seven from Derbyshire treated for 'intentional poisoning' and a ten-year-old boy from Stockport who tried to hang himself.

More than 12,600 people aged 17 or under were taken to casualty in 2013 after intentionally hurting themselves, figures obtained under the Freedom Of Information Act show.

It represents a rise of nearly 3,000 from 2012, when the figure stood at just under 9,800.

And the true number is thought to be far higher, as 42 of the 160 NHS hospital trusts in England refused to respond to the FOI.

Rachel Welch, director of selfharm.co.uk, a support charity for young people, said cyber-bullying was 'definitely one reason' for the increase.

However, it's also just the way the world is at the moment,' she added. 'It's

not an easy world for young people. They are being pushed to do well at school but at the same time they see being given the news that because of the economy there will probably be no jobs for them when they leave.

'Kids don't see a future that is filled with opportunities.'

The number of youngsters treated for self-harm has more than doubled over the past five years, with the largest rise seen among 12-year-old girls.

Among those aged 11 and under, boys were more likely to hurt themselves – but in the older age group, 24,545 girls were hospitalised, compared with 6,802 boys.

However, Mrs Welch said the figures might not tell the whole story.

'In teenage years, it can be so much harder for boys to come forward and tell us how they are feeling,' she added.

'Whereas a girl might cut herself, a boy might punch a wall. Often this is not recognised as self-harm.'

by SHARON MARRIS

Teenage drivers 'causing too many fatal accidents'

TEENAGE drivers are involved in more than ten per cent of road accidents where someone is injured, a study reveals.

But only 1.5 per cent of all motorists are aged 17 to 19 – spurring calls for newly qualified drivers to face restrictions after passing their test.

Dyfed Powys, in Wales, saw 20 per cent of serious crashes involve a teenage driver – the highest figure in Britain. The RAC Foundation, which carried out the research, believes curfews and a limit on young passengers could save 430 lives a year, as it would reduce a motorist's exposure to risk.

'We should all be interested in preserving young drivers' lives,' said RAC director Prof Stephen Glaister.

may be withheld from all only. Britain's edition on 27 May 2014. provided by No. 4633015.

Good or bad content?

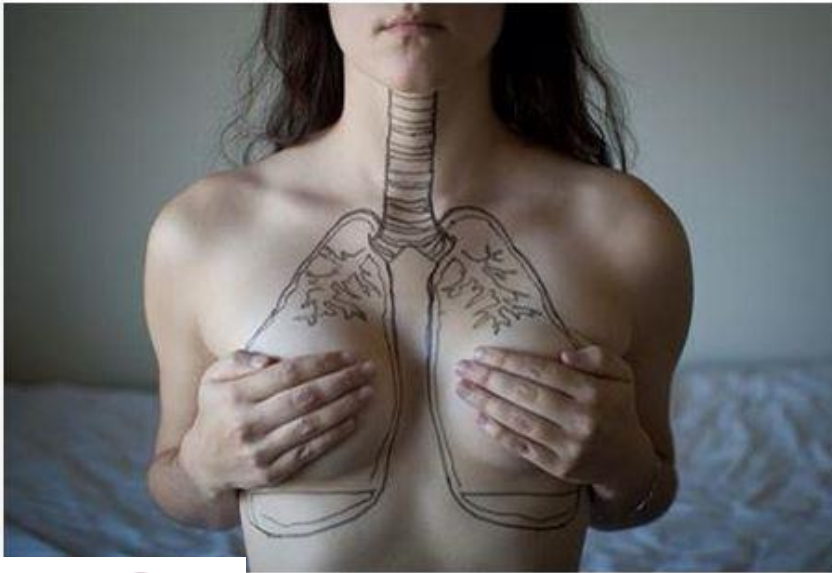
It all depends on the context

“to learn about the respiratory system..This pic is beautiful!”



Valentina
25 October 2011

para aprender el sistema respiratorio jsnsksnsksnsksn
es linda la fotooo<3_♥



4 1



www.eukidsonline.net

So this is
porn...I
guess???



Risks \neq Harm (1)

- **Not all risks result in harm** and not all children are affected by risks in the same way
- **opportunities and risks go hand in hand:**
 - The more online activities children engage in, the more children are skilled and self-confident (also to deal with online risks) and vice versa.

(Online) opportunities and risks go hand in hand 😊



Do we want to “protect” our children like this?



Or like this?



Final Recommendations

- **Media literacy’ and ‘media education’** are essential to mitigate online risks, but also to fully take advantage of the opportunities new ICT offer
- **Special attention for vulnerable groups is needed**
 - children from certain minority groups, and children with disabilities, may be more likely to be bullied, harassed or exploited online
 - EU Kids online concluded that online and offline vulnerability are interrelated
 - Double jeopardy effect: children with more psychological problems suffer more from online as well as offline risks



Final Recommendations (2)

- Policy makers can contribute to children's online safety by:
 - introducing appropriate legislation & ensuring their effective implementation
 - developing effective policy responses
 - training law enforcement officials, teachers and other professionals working with children
 - raising awareness of online risks among children and their parents and caregivers
 - supporting recovery for children who have been exposed to abuse and exploitation
 - collecting & updating data
 - incentivizing the private sector to introduce measures to enhance children's online safety



Final Recommendations (3)

- **Evaluate the potential positive impact of the use of online technologies to support helplines and other social or counseling services.** Few studies have referred to this, but they do show some encouraging results:

“Some children prefer to discuss their problems using chat because this enables them, among others, to discuss sensitive issues silently with somebody in private; it provides them with more time to think about what they want to say and to understand what the other person has said. Chatting also allows the volunteer who is helping them to remain at distance.” (Fukkink & Hermanns, 2009, p. 946)

Fukkink, R. & Hermanns, J. (2009). Counseling children at a helpline: Chatting or calling?



Final Recommendations (4)

- *«I am happy that I can finally talk to someone. I don't dare to talk about it with anyone else because I feel so ashamed»*
(Extract from chat conversation with a 13-year old boy victim of sexual abuse)
- *“I want him to stop doing this, but I don't really know how to deal with it”*
(Extract from chat conversation with a 15-year old girl victim of sexual abuse)

Ch@dvice project (2012), Daphne programme, EC

Challenges

- Situations where the abuse is still ongoing
- Ethical issues: Professional secrecy vs. anonymity, etc.



Big Challenge ahead

How to protect & empower very young users in a post-desktop culture?



Thanks!



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